



COVID-19: Reducing Risk Keeping Safe & Preventing Spread

How To Reduce Your Risk, Especially If You Are Not Fully Vaccinated

We have been able to reopen Los Angeles County because of the large decline in the number of people becoming infected with COVID-19. But the pandemic is not over, and the virus continues to spread, especially to those who are not fully vaccinated¹. New variants of the virus that are more infectious are becoming more common in the US, including Los Angeles County.

The following information is to help people understand who is most at risk of getting infected and sick, which situations are riskier, and what steps they can take to stay safe and slow the spread of COVID-19.

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

People who are not vaccinated are at the highest risk of getting infected with COVID-19. This includes people who have not completed their Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series (i.e., they only got the first dose) as well as children under age 12 who are too young to be vaccinated. Unvaccinated adults who are older or who have [certain medical conditions](#) are at highest risk of severe COVID-19 disease.

People with [severely weakened immune systems](#) who are fully vaccinated might not respond as well to the vaccine so may still be at increased risk of COVID-19. This includes people with certain health conditions or who are taking certain medications (such as treatment for cancer, organ transplants or autoimmune conditions).

WHICH SITUATIONS ARE RISKIER?

Understanding how the COVID-19 virus is spread is important. It will help you to assess your risk and take steps to protect yourself in different situations.

The virus spreads from person to person mainly through respiratory droplets that are released into the air by a person who has COVID-19. For example, when they speak, sing, cough, shout, sneeze, or breathe heavily. These droplets are then breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, nose, or mouth. A person's risk of getting infected goes up the closer they are to someone with COVID-19. Enclosed places with poor air flow can also increase the risk of getting infected. This is because the droplets that have the virus can concentrate and spread in the air past 6 feet. They can even stay floating in the air after an infected person has left the room.

This is why masks are important. They lower the number of respiratory droplets people release into the air AND also the number that they breathe in.

It is also possible, but less common, for the virus to spread by touching a surface with droplets on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

There are certain places where COVID-19 spreads more easily

- **Closed spaces** with poor air flow.
- **Crowded places** with many people nearby
- **Close contact settings** especially where people are talking (or breathing heavily) close together

¹ You are considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 two (2) weeks after: the dose of a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series, a single dose of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine or you finished the series of a COVID-19 vaccine that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization. See [fully vaccinated](#) web page for more information.

HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF COVID-19

- **Get vaccinated.** It is the best way to protect against COVID-19 (see below)
- **Wear a mask that fits and filters well.** Your mask is one of the most powerful tools you have to protect yourself and other unvaccinated people (see below)
- **Avoid crowded places.** Being in crowds, especially indoors, puts you at a higher risk. If you need to be indoors, try to go during non-peak hours and consider wearing a more protective mask. Limit how long you are there.
- **Improve air flow.** Avoid indoor spaces with poor air flow as much as possible. Open windows and doors, use a fan, go outside.
- **Choose outdoor spaces** for social and fitness activities
- **Keep your distance.** Use two arms lengths as your guide (about 6 feet) for social distancing with people outside your household when you are not sure that they are fully vaccinated.
- **Socialize with the same set of friends and relatives** rather than mixing with many different people who are not vaccinated.
- **Be flexible.** Be willing to change your plans or leave if you find yourself in a place where COVID-19 can spread more easily. For example, indoors in a loud crowded restaurant with a lot of people who are not wearing masks.
- **Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer often** - especially after being in public spaces where surfaces are touched by many people. Avoid eating and touching your face with unwashed hands.
- **Stay home when sick.** If you have symptoms of COVID-19, talk to a doctor and get a test. You should stay home and away from others until you get the result of your COVID-19 test or until your provider tells you that you don't have COVID-19. To learn about symptoms and what to do if you are sick see ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare.

VACCINATION

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19. It will slow the spread of COVID-19 including variants of the virus. And, it will also help lower the chances of new and more dangerous variants emerging.

- If you are already vaccinated, encourage your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors to get vaccinated.
- If you are 12 years of age or older and not yet fully vaccinated, consider getting vaccinated now. Vaccines are safe, effective, and free to everyone regardless of immigration status. Talk with your doctor about any concerns.

Vaccines are widely available across LA without an appointment. Visit www.VaccinateLACounty.com to find a location near you. Call 1-833-540-0473 if you need help making an appointment, need transportation to a vaccination site, or are homebound. Phone lines are open from 8am to 8:30pm 7 days a week. Information is also available in many languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1.

MASKS

Your mask should fit snugly over your nose and mouth and be made of at least two layers so that they filter well. If you are in a crowded place with other people who may not be fully vaccinated, consider “[double masking](#)” (wearing a cloth face mask over surgical mask) or a respirator (e.g., N95 or KN95). These offer a higher level of protection. This is especially important if you are indoors or in a crowded outdoor place.

Make sure you wear a mask over your mouth and nose when you are in all the places below.

EVERYONE, regardless of vaccination status, <u>must</u> wear a mask:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On planes, trains, buses, ferries, taxis and ride-shares, and all other forms of public transport• In transportation hubs like airports, bus terminals, train stations, marinas, seaports or other ports, subway stations, or any other area that provides transportation• Healthcare settings• State and local correctional facilities and detention centers.• Shelters and cooling centers• Indoors at any youth-serving facility (such as K-12 schools, childcare, day camps, etc.)• Any business or government office serving the public that requires everyone to wear a mask
UNVACCINATED people <u>must</u> also wear a mask:
In indoor public settings and businesses, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Movie theaters• Restaurants• Retail Spaces• Family entertainment centers• Mega-events• Meetings• Government offices serving the public
In addition, FULLY VACCINATED people are <u>strongly encouraged</u> to wear a mask in the indoor public settings and businesses above.

Note: You are allowed to take off your mask while doing certain activities such as when you are actively eating, drinking, or swimming.

*There are some people who should not wear a mask, such as children younger than 2 and people with certain medical conditions or disabilities. See [Who should not wear a mask](#) and [Special considerations for persons with communication difficulties or certain disabilities](#).

Learn more about masks at ph.lacounty.gov/masks.